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UNH Researchers Find Questionnaires the Best Way to Measure Child Victimization

By [Erika Mantz](#)
UNH News Bureau

April 4, 2001

DURHAM, N.H. -- Standardized questionnaires are the most reliable way to determine child victimization, according to a new report by University of New Hampshire researchers. Adolescents are victimized at two to three times the rate of adults, and experience assaults which are equally injurious as those perpetrated against adults.

Statistics that show youth are the sector of the population most vulnerable to criminal victimization, and current events like the school shootings at Columbine and in California have led to an increased interest in the nature of victimization that children experience.

A report released by the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention provides guidelines for choosing the most appropriate questionnaire. "Choosing and Using Child Victimization Questionnaires" was written by Sherry L. Hamby and David Finkelhor, of the UNH Crimes Against Children Research Center.

"With all the new concerns about children's safety, school counselors, child protection workers, and juvenile court officials, just to name a few, are eager to find out all the different ways a child may have been victimized," says Finkelhor. "They want to find out if kids have been bullied, sexually abused, beaten at home, or witnesses to domestic violence. These are not easy things always to ask about. It works better to use a structured questionnaire than simply to try to do it by instinct. In this bulletin, we are trying to help practitioners and researchers find and use the questionnaires that are right for them and right for the

children and youth they work with."

According to the authors, to choose an appropriate victimization instrument, several issues have to be considered. These include what type of victimization is being measured, whether interviews will be conducted or a self-administered questionnaire used, whether results need to correspond to official crime and child protection categories, the period of time, the ages of the children, and whether results will be compared to national norms.

In general, standardized self-report questionnaires of victimization yield the most accurate reports, the authors conclude.

The full report, "Choosing and Using Child Victimization Questionnaires," is available online at <http://ojjdp.ncjrs.org>. To contact Finkelhor, call 603-862-2761.

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